

PRESS RELEASE



The Cleveland Museum of Art

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FOR RELEASE ON RECEIPT

KALISH, KELLER AND SOMMER: CLEVELAND MASTERS FROM THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM
October 2-17, 1982

Works by three artists prominent in Cleveland during the first half of this century--Max Kalish (1891-1945), Henry G. Keller (1869-1949), and William Sommer (1867-1949)--will be exhibited in the first floor gallery of the Frank J. Lausche State Office Building, West Sixth and Superior Avenues, from October 2 to 17, 1982. The exhibition, which consists of six sculptures by Kalish, fourteen paintings by Keller, and seventeen paintings by Sommer, was organized by Tom E. Hinson, curator of contemporary art at The Cleveland Museum of Art, from the Museum's collection. The free exhibition is part of the 1982 Cleveland Art Festival and is supported by a grant from Central National Bank.

According to Hinson, "The Cleveland Museum of Art has a fine collection of works by Kalish, Keller, and Sommer, many of which have not been exhibited in some time. During the Cleveland Art Festival, when we focus attention on the community's visual artists, it is particularly appropriate that we recall the achievements of earlier artists who were vital forces in the artistic life of Cleveland."

Max Kalish sculpted the human figure in bronze and marble. He produced portraits and statuettes of many of the prominent people of his time as well as a series of powerful sculptures of workingmen which proclaim the dignity of human labor.

Born in Lithuania, Kalish emigrated to Cleveland with his family in 1898. He studied at the Cleveland School of Art, the National Academy of Design in New York, and at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. During the decade following World

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War I, he lived and worked for periods of time in both Cleveland and Paris. His first large-scale show, at the Korner and Wood Company in Cleveland in 1926, was followed by numerous other exhibitions in New York and other cities. From 1924 to 1930 he exhibited in The Cleveland Museum of Art's May Show.

In 1932 Kalish completed one of his most important commissions, a twelve-foot-high bronze statue of Abraham Lincoln delivering the Gettysburg Address, which now stands facing the Mall at the west entrance of the Cleveland Board of Education building. In that same year Kalish moved to New York City, and in 1939 to Great Neck, Long Island, where he lived until his death in 1945. One of his last and most ambitious projects was the creation of some fifty bronze statuettes of notable Americans of World War II. Among those who posed for this project were Presidents Roosevelt and Truman, General George C. Marshall, Bernard Baruch, Nelson Rockefeller, Ernie Pyle, and Bob Hope. The collection of statuettes, underwritten by publisher Willard Kiplinger, was presented to the Smithsonian Institution.

The sculptures selected for this exhibition reflect Kalish's sensitivity to his subjects and materials. There are four bronze statuettes, three depicting laborers, entitled The Driller, The Digger, and Steel into the Sky, and an unusual representation of Christ. A beautifully carved marble female torso won first prize for sculpture in the 1925 May Show. In his poignant depiction of New Life, a pair of hands holding an infant emerge from a block of white marble.

Henry G. Keller was a talented and respected painter who taught at the Cleveland Institute of Art from 1902 to 1945 and influenced several generations of Cleveland artists. Although he lived almost all his life in Cleveland, Keller traveled extensively, particularly in Spain and the American West. As a young man he studied at what is now the Cleveland Institute of Art, the Art Student's League in New York, and later in Munich with the great painter of animals, Heinrich Johann Zügel.

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In 1913 he exhibited two paintings in the famous Armory Show in New York, one of which, Wisdom and Destiny, is included in this exhibition. Keller exhibited his work in important art shows around the country and in The Cleveland Museum of Art's May Show each year from 1919 until his death in 1949.

The paintings in this exhibition represent Keller's wide range of subjects. His skill at portraying animals (for a short time he produced animal posters for the Ringling Brothers circus) is illustrated in a brilliant watercolor of birds, The Aviary, and an equally fine oil painting of Storm-Frightened Animals. Another important oil, First Show at Two, reflects his fascination with circus life. Two oil paintings of similar subjects, Evening on the Road to Granada and The Road to the Sea, recall his travels in Spain. Keller's mastery of watercolor is particularly evident in several paintings of flowers.

William Sommer gained national recognition for his watercolors depicting the landscape and inhabitants of the rural Brandywine valley between Cleveland and Akron where he lived from 1914 to 1949. Scenes with horses, cows, houses, and trees, still lifes, and portraits of family and friends, were rendered with bold colors in a style reminiscent of Cezanne but uniquely Sommer's own.

Sommer grew up in Detroit where he learned the trade of lithography. Until 1929, when he became a full-time painter, he worked as a lithographer, first in Boston, then New York, England, and finally Cleveland, where he settled in 1907. His formal artistic training was limited to the art classes he attended as a boy and to a year's study in Munich when he was in his early twenties. In Cleveland he painted in his spare time with the members of the Kokoon Club, which he had helped to form, but his artistic output increased dramatically when he moved to Brandywine in 1914. The years from 1914 to 1945, when his wife died, were generally happy and productive ones for Sommer as he discovered and experimented with new

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artistic styles, pursued his interests in philosophy, literature, and music, and shared ideas with a circle of friends which included the poet Hart Crane. His work, shown in local and national exhibitions, won critical acclaim. He exhibited in the May Show virtually every year from 1922 to 1945, repeatedly winning prizes for drawing and watercolor. In the mid-1930s he worked on a number of federal art projects, producing murals for the Cleveland Public Auditorium and the Cleveland Public Library.

The watercolors and oils in this show, representative of Sommer's finest work, illustrate his use of color to create form. Included are landscapes of the Brandywine valley, renderings of horses and cows, portraits of children, and a self-portrait executed around 1948.

Hours of the exhibition, Kalish, Keller and Sommer, are Monday-Friday, 10:00-6:00 pm, Saturday, 12:00-6:00 pm, and Sunday, 1:00-6:00 pm. John Moore, assistant curator in the Museum's Department of Art History and Education, will talk on the exhibition on Thursday, October 7, and Thursday, October 14, at 12:30 pm.

The Cleveland Art Festival, of which this exhibition is a part, is sponsored by the New Organization for the Visual Arts and is supported by the Ohio Arts Council, the Board of County Commissioners, The Cleveland Foundation, The George Gund Foundation, and other Greater Cleveland area foundations, businesses, and individuals.

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